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ABSTRACT

The Physical Response Education System (PRES) project began in pilot studies of the effectiveness of acupressure in addressing the physical and emotional problems of disabled students. In the pilot study (1979-80), 12 students received 6 weekly sessions from a professional acupressurist, and in the intern study (1980-81) 15 students received 8 weekly sessions from newly trained staff and volunteer acupressurists. Treatment patterns were tailored to meet the individual needs of each student. Results of the intervention with 23 students included changes in sensory motor functioning, emotional/social behavior, health, and cognition/communication. Acupressure training for PRES staff is described, and information on such professional issues as parent permission is provided. Prospects for the future use of PRES in stress reducing efforts in the schools are noted. (CL)

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PRES: PHYSICAL RESPONSE EDUCATION SYSTEMS

THE ORIENTAL MODEL GOES TO SCHOOL

by

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PRES: PHYSICAL RESPONSE EDUCATION SYSTEMS

THE ORIENTAL MODEL GOES TO SCHOOL

MY INTRODUCTION TO ENERGY

My introduction to the High-Tech form of touch called acupressure came in 1979 as a result of my own response to stress-- frequent ard severe migraine headaches. After months of pursuing traditional Western treatments with little dependable success, I was encouraged by more experienced friends to try acupuncture. Fortunately, a well-respected medical doctor in our area is also a skilled acupuncturist, the developer of a new form of structural acupressure called Zero Balancing, and the author of INNER BRIDGES.

My first appointment with Dr. Fritz Smith marked the beginning of my own experience of energy and the end of my frightful migraines. After reading the twelve pulses at my wrists, he gently inserted a hair-fine needle in the top of each foot and quickly removed it. When the first needle was removed, I felt something very subtle, but very real, suddenly stop - and then start up again - at a different rate, like a fan reversing direction. I also felt something flowing up my leg, quivering inside the skin. When I described these sensations to him, he smiled and said I was experiencing the flow of energy through the meridian he had stimulated. Then he showed me a chart with lines which exactly corresponded to what I had felt in my legs.

I left his office that day feeling more relaxed and calm inside than I could remember. When I returned in two weeks, I had not had another migraine, a record period of time to be free of that blinding, sickening pain. He checked my pulses and said that the original treatment was still effective, and I made an appointment for a month later. That initiation to energy work is etched vividly in my memory, now seven years later. I have not suffered one headache - migraine or otherwise - and my life has changed in wondrous directions through my continuing study and practice of energy systems.

HOW PRES STARTED

In late 1979 I was unexpectedly transferred from my position as Director of Child Development Programs in the Santa Cruz County Office of Education to become a principal in Special Education. Suddenly I was responsible for the safety, health and education of over a hundred severely handicapped students - infants through young adult age. Nothing in my previous education or experience had prepared me for the impact of kids with contracted bodies in wheel chairs and walkers; teenagers with raging hormones and preschool minds; and parents grieving over the loss of their ideal child as they struggled to accept the reality of their damaged child.

In the midst of my adjustment to these new challenges came the suggestion of our dedicated nurse, Mary Farquhar, that acupressure might be helpful to relax some of these students. Her own chronic neck and shoulder pain had been totally relieved by just a few sessions. She explained that it was "just like acupuncture - but with fingers." My own experience was still very fresh, and I was too new to the field to realize just how innovative this would sound. As her administrator, I agreed to be Project Director and together we developed a very simple six week design to pilot test the technique. An experienced acupressurist, Halimah Ashley Bean, was hired as a consultant to give six individualized weekly acupressure sessions to twelve students. Within two weeks results started flowing back to the office, and I was being asked questions for which I had no answers.

MY ENERGY CURRICULUM

At this point I decided that I needed a basic course in acupressure. The first day of the first Jin Shin Do™ class with Aminah Raheem, Ph.D., hooked me. It was like a refresher course in a subject that I had always known and loved. I discovered that I had a natural talent for locating points, feeling pulses, and moving energy. I also discovered that Mary was right, "It's just like acupuncture - but with fingers". I felt the same flowing sensations, the same deep relaxation and sense of well-being that I had known with acupuncture.

Since that first class I have taken hundreds of hours of energy related courses in various forms of acupressure - wanting to learn and experience everything about this amazing high-tech touch. Jin Shin Do™, TherapEase, Jin Shin Jyutsu, Shiatsu, Zero Balancing, Tai Chi, Five Elements, Educational Kinesiology, and Chi Kung have all been part of my own energy curriculum. In those seven years I've seen the transformation of my own body and being, and have witnessed startling and dramatic changes in hundreds of others, students and adults. The truth of Einstein's famous theory, $E=MC^2$, is now clear to me at an experiential level, no longer an interesting abstraction. Energy is fast moving matter - energy transforms the matter of our physical bodies. Energy/matter interact constantly - and there are simple principles and patterns which promote the flow of energy, releasing blockages, to effect an integration of body, mind, emotions, and spirit.

STRESS AND LEARNING

Western science, which has specialized in the physical or matter aspects of health, has just begun to deal with the need for regular and total relexation. Most Western approaches to relaxation emphasize a "mind over matter" method involving progressive relaxation of the body by the mind, or the use of a mechanical device, as in bio-feedback. Little has been done with the need for emotional release outside of some psycho-therapeutic approaches, and almost nothing has been written about the energy balancing used for thousands of years in Oriental cultures.

Long term, unreleased stress is especially obvious in children with cerebral palsy and other physically handicapping conditions and those with severe learning disorders. When the mind cannot or will not cooperate to relax the body, mind, and emotions, then tensions build and the body tightens; the mind and emotions become blocked. Children who know they are going to fail at self-help or academic tasks soon lose their natural curiosity and enthusiasm for learning. When every effort results in painful failure, there is a gradual "shutting down"; not trying is preferable to the embarrassment of another certain failure.

It was with these students, disabled children from 6 to 18 years of age, that acupressure was introduced to public schools in 1980. The results were so extraordinarily successful that the research design had to be expanded to record changes, not only in the psychomotor area, but in every area of their development. Physically disabled students, limbs now loosened enough to bear weight, sat and stood for the first time; some spoke their first words. Emotionally disturbed, delinquent boys took responsibility for their own behavior and learning, getting their minds and feelings under control. All of the students became more aware and responsive, more sociable and receptive to learning and to affection. Problem behaviors diminished; in some cases, disappeared.

PILOT AND INTERN STUDIES

In the Pilot Study (1979-80) 12 students received 6 weekly sessions from a professional acupressurist, and in the Intern Study (1980-81) 15 students received 8 weekly sessions from newly trained staff and volunteer acupressurists. Treatment or session patterns were individualized to meet the targeted needs of each student.

Study Results

All 23 who completed the series were observed by teachers, parents, therapist, and some by additional staff, including nurses, speech therapists, and psychologists. Records of target and changing behaviors were kept in these four areas: Sensory-motor, cognitive/communication, emotional and health. 87% or 20 students improved in at least 3 areas; 74% or 17 students showed significant improvement in all four areas. A PRES Progress Report form was developed and is now used widely. (See sample)

Sensory Motor Changes

Multiple Responses: Fewer involuntary movements; muscle relaxation, greater motor control; improved fine motor control; able to follow rhythm; attempts new physical activities. One 9 yr. old CP student crawled, sat, stood, walked, and spoke for the first time; one 13 yr old student learned to play soccer, swim, ride a skateboard and a bicycle, and use gym bars, all for the first time. (See self-portraits)

Cognitive/Communication Changes

Multiple Responses: Initiates language; concentrates on listening; responds to questions; first spontaneous language; increased vocabulary and use of language; increased attention span; completes homework; visual/auditory memory improved; reading and writing improved. One 17 yr. old went from echolalic speech to simple sentences; same 13 year old improved 3-5 grade levels in math and language and went from 40% to 0 absence rate.

Emotional/Social Changes

Multiple Responses: Behavior/compliance improves; tasks completed; more sociable; happier, laughs, jokes; self-care improved; verbalizes problems; less fighting & aggression; stereotypic mannerisms reduced; less passive, more appropriately assertive; peer and family relations improved; less frustration and crying; shows affection; reduced tantrums; improved body image and self-concept; Same 13 yr. old quit fighting with family and peers, did acupressure on Mom and brother.

Health Changes

Multiple Responses: Less physical tension; allergies and asthma improved; bedwetting reduced or eliminated; lethargy improved; chronic pain improved; digestion normalized; ear infections eliminated. Same 13 yr. old's hair grew back in bald spots.

HOW PRES GREW

Staff and parents who learned and practiced acupressure techniques reported health benefits for themselves which included relief from migraine headeaches, chronic allergy problems, needed weight loss, vision improvement, relief from back and neck pain and tension, chest anxiety, and a general feeling of health and well-being. Parents have been enthusiastic supporters of acupressure in the classroom, often requesting it for their child in annual planning meetings with staff.

School districts have been quick to respond to this simple, painless and drug free method of reducing stress and anxiety and improving learning. Over 20,000 education and health professionals in 10 states, Canada, China, and Italy, have experienced the hands-on PRES Workshops that are regularly offered. Most workshops are sponsored by school districts and County Offices of Education, or by professional associations or colleges.

Articles describing the PRES experience have appeared in over 20 publications for health and education professionals, and for a general audience. A bibliography of Acupuncture/Acupressure books and readings has been prepared to assist the several graduate students now studying the effects of acupressure in many learning situations.

ACUPRESSURE/ACUPUNCTURE

Acupressure is a more ancient version of acupuncture, a method for affecting the bio-electrical energy within and around the human body. While acupuncture is a highly refined and sophisticated science of balance and healing, acuressure is the "folk-art" level of unblocking and releasing the body's flow of Chi or life-force energy.

According to Pendleton and Mehling in RELAX WITH SELF-THERAPEASE, the practice of "hand-holding" developed as the medicine man or shaman in ancient China learned to strengthen war lords and emperors. No longer satisfied with "ancestral sins" as explanations for pain and illness, these powerful rulers now relaxed and healed under the increasingly sensitive hands of healers-in-the-making. Many generations of tradition evolved this healing art to a full description of the 14 meridian system, including hundreds of points with very specific associations to mental, physical and emotional health. From this hand stimulation and release of the body's Chi later developed the practice of acupuncture. Before the Bronze Age Chinese healers had perfected the meridian system model and were using bone and wood needles to stimulate points.

Modern day anthropologists document similar healing practices among some American Indian tribes. Medicine men and women still hold the body in particular patterns learned from the Ancient Ones. Since Native Americans migrated to this continent from Asia about 20,000 years ago, this may well be the oldest on-going health care method on earth.

From China this health practice of balancing the Chi energy flow within the body spread easily to Japan and other Asian countries. A rich exchange of practice, innovations, and technical improvement developed when political conditions were favorable. In Japan acupressure has traditionally been a specialty of blind persons as it requires good concentration and highly senstitive touch. Today, blind high school students are given vocational training and experience in acupressure and Oriental massage. They are then able to become productive, independent citizens, earning a good living from private practice or work at a clinic.

ACUPRESSURE TRAINING

All of the PRES Study acupressurists were trained in Santa Cruz, CA by Aminah Raheem, Ph.D., in the Jin Shin Do™ method of acupressure developed by Iona Teeguarden. Many of them were also trained by Raheem in the Therap/Ease model of Pendleton and Mehling, which was adapted from Mary Iino Burmeister's Jin Shin Jyutsu.

These very similar acupressure systems, The Way (Do) and the Magic (Jyutsu) of the Compassionate (Jin) Spirit (Shin), use a pattern of two or more acupoints held in sequence with fingertips or thumbs at comfortably firm pressure for a full minute or more. A base point is chosen and a specific pattern of points is selected to systematically release the tight, painful, or congested area. Patterns in the Jin Shin forms of acupressure have been developed by experts in Traditional Chinese Medicine, incorporating the Five Element Theory, Strange Flows, and Yin/Yang balances. As the points are held, longer at the densest areas, the tissue or muscle at the surface of the skin softens, opening and becoming less tender as the blocked energy releases. Pulsing at the points, previously blocked or erratic, becomes rhythmic and synchronized as the energy moves and balances. The sample JSD pattern for "Uptightness" from the PRES workbook uses JSD #20 (GB21) as base point.

Depending on the skill of the acupressurist, and the time and place available, the sessions may be brief and simple applications of short formula patterns--a five minute neck release in the classroom or staff room. A more complex session involving pulse diagnosis and analysis of the entire range of mental, physical, and emotional responses of the recipient, would take 60-90 minutes. While the receiver may be encouraged verbally to let go or to relax, the experience is basically non-verbal, highly kinesthetic and very enjoyable.

Acupressure, like acupuncture, is practiced at different levels of expertise and sophistication. The folk-art level of pattern or formula acupressure can be applied by anyone for their own or family member's benefit. PRES has avoided any conflict with the medical field by concentrating on simple stress and learning applications, rather than health benefits from acupressure.

At another level, highly skilled and trained acupressurists read the twelve meridian pulses, observe 10 or more characteristics of the face and tongue, and select or create a pattern to correct very specific energy imbalances. Raheem, Teeguarden and others combine acupressure and psychotherapy with great success. In some states these well-trained practitioners work in concert with medical doctors, chiropractors, or acupuncturists. Self- or professionally administered, acupressure can be a very powerful adjunct to acupuncture treatments. Licensing requirements vary by state and local jurisdiction; many acupressurists are licensed as massage or Oriental massage therapists.

All the PRES Study acupressurists had received at least 32 hours of training in Jin Shin Do® acupressure--or the Basic and Intermediate Levels. In the Basic level the 30 main JSD points and the Strange Flows, or meridian-connecting patterns, are taught. Intermediate level includes 15-20 additional points, Five Element Theory, and patterns for the emotional as well as physical aspects of the receiver.

PROFESSIONAL ISSUES

Acupressurists serving as volunteers with PRES have reported many interesting observations in working with handicapped children. Many in the PRES Study team developed very strong personal connections with their students, becoming both therapist and friend. The students responded so positively, relishing their weekly hour of touch and attention, while they learned to relax and to move and think more effectively. Since the Studies continued for only 6-8 weeks, long-term dependence did not develop; however, after the study many students requested more acupressure--some by gesturing at their shoulders and backs when the volunteers came into the classrooms.

Written parent permission was obtained for all of the PRES Study participants after parents had attended an information meeting and had received a sample Neck and Shoulder Release from staff. They also agreed to keep weekly records on the progress of their students during the Study. In learning that acupressure was proposed for use with their child, parents had two common questions: (1) What about the needles? (2) Will my child be undressed? Now that acupressure is being used routinely in many special education classrooms, parents are not notified unless their child is recommended for special sessions from a volunteer. Many schools are now using a letter to parents (see sample) with a Neck Release pattern for them to practice with their child at home.

WHERE PRES IS GOING

The future for PRES as a stress reduction curriculum in schools looks very promising. School districts throughout the country are expressing interest and sending staff to be trained by PRES. State hospitals are teaching acupressure to their nurses and psych techs to help control behavior problems with their developmentally disabled and mentally ill clients. The PRES training sequence now includes: Awareness (2 hr.); Level I (6 hr.) 30 basic points and simple, 5 minute or less, patterns; Level II (9 hr.) 15 additional points and 20-30 minute patterns. Levels III and IV (30 hr.), are taught in a residential summer program, and emphasize 5 Element theory, additional energy methods including Shiatsu, Tai Chi, and elements of Zero Balancing, and the training of new PRES instructors.

PRES has operated for seven years with no funding other than workshop fees and materials sales, only because of the dedication of staff who have donated thousands of hours. Grants are being pursued to assist teachers to implement PRES energy practices in their classrooms. A national network of acupressurists is developing and PRES attempts to connect practitioners and teachers with those interested in their services. PRES RELEASES, a quarterly newsletter, is published and distributed to several thousand on the PRES mailing list. A free sample copy, including a PRES publications list, will be sent on request.

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